

## 5 Tips to Successful Networking in the Fashion Industry

*By: Beth Jones*

You hear it all the time; networking is key to gaining and growing in this industry. You hear it, and I'm here to tell you that it's the TRUTH! Every success I have had in the fashion industry has ultimately come from networking. Networking can make a difference in your career, but only if you know how to use it to your advantage. From my own experience, I'm going to give you five tips to successful networking in the fashion industry.

### **Show Up**

First and foremost, show up! Networking events can be industry parties, previews, conferences, an invitation to lunch or dinner, or basically anything that puts you in a social circle with industry insiders. If you get an invitation to one of these events, GO! These events can be intimidating, require some travel or even cost money, but they will often be worth your time and investment.

If you are new to the game and you are not receiving invitations, seek out opportunities that don't require an invitation. Many brands host parties to launch a new collection, and often the brand reps are present at the parties. Consider joining a brand's facebook page to hear about the latest events. Conferences are popping up all over the country for fashion students and bloggers ([Lucky FABB](#), [ALT Summit](#), [Teen Vogue Fashion University](#)). These conferences bring in well-known speakers and industry insiders that are there to meet, greet and teach you what they know. There are also traditional networking events hosted by universities bringing in alumni who have succeeded in the business. These events are a no-brainer and must be attended.

### **Dress to Impress**

You are in the fashion industry, and of course, what you wear matters. It doesn't mean that you should go crazy and wear something that's not you or too over the top, it just means that you should go and be an advertisement of who you are and what you want to do.

Fashion people notice fashion people. They will remember your great statement necklace or bold-bright skirt and it will leave an impression. Take some time to prepare what you are going to wear, making sure it is a true representation of you and what you want to be in this industry.

### **Engage the Right People**

Before you attend the event, do a little research to find out about the key people who will be there. Look for photos online, research their background and what they are currently doing. You should walk into the event with a good knowledge of the people that you want to engage with in conversation.

Don't be afraid to walk up and introduce yourself and start a conversation. If you've done your research, you will have plenty to talk about. Compliment them on what they do and ask them questions, but also be aware of the others around them or their responsibilities during the event. Be sensitive to them and their time.

### **Give and Gather**

After engaging the right people in conversation, make sure to swap information. Ask if they have a card on them, but be conscientious when asking. Don't just approach the person and ask for a card, unless they have offered that to the attendees. If you have engaged in a good conversation, and feel that it would be appropriate to ask for a card, then politely ask if they have a card and if they would mind you following up with them.

Be prepared to offer your own card. If you don't have a current position that has provided a card, create your own card. You can create cards easily and very affordably on sites like [vistaprint.com](http://vistaprint.com).

### **Follow Up**

The final step to successful networking is to follow up! Most likely, the people you made contact with, spoke with a lot of other people and aren't going back to their work thinking about you or how they can use you. You have to remind them to think of you.

Using the information you gathered, email your new contacts. Thank them for their time and remind them of who you are. Feel free to offer yourselves to them, send links to portfolio work, or attach your resume. In the email you can also mention specific ways that you could be helpful to them.

Most of your new contacts are probably very busy people who receive a lot of emails during the day, so don't be discouraged if you don't hear from them right away or at all. If you are very interested in working with them or gaining knowledge from them, email them again after some time has passed. If you do any work that might be of interest to them, send examples or links. Be diligent, but not bothersome. Not all contacts will work out, but if you knock on enough doors, one will eventually open.

I promise! Network, network, network!

<http://www.luckymag.com/blogconference>

<http://www.altitudesummit.com/>

<http://www.teenvoguefashionuniversity.com/>

<http://www.vistaprint.com/vp/welcomeback.aspx?xnav=welcome&rd=23>